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THE  
SOVEREIGNTY  
OF THE  
*Divine Administration,*  
*Vindicated;*  
OR, A  
RATIONAL ACCOUNT

Our Blessed Saviour's remarkable  
Temptation in the Wilderness;

The Possessed at Capernaum;

The Demoniacs at Gadara, and the  
Destruction of the Swine:

With Free Remarks upon several other Important Passages  
in the New Testament.

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By the Late Reverend Mr. THOMAS DIXON of BOLTON. *K*  
With a Preface, by the Reverend Mr. JOHN SEDDON of  
MANCHESTER.

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L O N D O N:

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THE  
SOVEREIGNTY  
OF THE  
Divine Administration  
Vindicated  
OF A  
RATIONAL ACCOUNT  
OF

Our Blessed Lord's Transfiguration  
Temptation, Wilderness, and  
The Passover  
The Demonic at Gadara, and the  
Defection of the Twelve

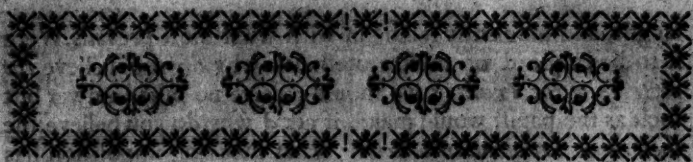


With Free Remarks upon several other important passages  
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With a Preface by the Reverend Mr. JOHN SAMPSON of  
MANCHESTER.

LONDON:  
Printed for BARNES and DAVIDSON, in the Strand;  
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T H E

# P R E F A C E.

Improvements in any science depend upon close, diligent, impartial enquiry. This is the only way to obtain just knowledge. 'Tis thro' the neglect of it that so much ignorance, falsehood and superstition prevail in the world; for nothing has been less cultivated than the knowledge of religion. Attempts to make improvements in this knowledge, instead of being gratefully receiv'd, have generally met with most unreasonable and cruel opposition.

It has been a very common thing, in the christian world, to censure and condemn persons for not *believing enough*; but little or no notice has been taken of the other extreme, *believing too much*. There has been a violent cry against *Heresy*; but men have been seldom warn'd against *Credulity, implicit Faith, and admitting principles without reason and evidence*. The latter however has been greatly prejudicial to real religion.

Surely those cannot be innocent who, for want of care to examine, suffer themselves to be led into sentiments ruinous to rational piety, destructive of moral virtue, subversive of the very end of our blessed Saviour's doctrine, life, and death. Ignorance in regard to the essence of religion, the real principles and rational grounds of the christian faith, in this land of liberty, must be highly criminal and inexcusable.

It has been the great fault of mankind, in all ages, to receive religious doctrines implicitly, without properly using their own understandings; blindly adhering to whatever they are taught,

taught, and indolently falling in with what most prevails. Were it to be enquir'd of most protestants why do you believe *the doctrine of the Trinity*? we should receive no other answer but such as the papist would make, if ask'd why do you believe *the doctrine of Transubstantiation*? What shocking imposition has there been upon the ignorance, weakness, and credulity of mankind! for, notwithstanding the reformation, many errors still remain; and, which is worse, the very spirit and genius of popery is retain'd by multitudes. Human authority, implicit faith, charges of heresy, condemning such as differ from them, and many things of the like nature are utterly inconsistent with true Protestantism. 'Tis not possible that should be true which is contrary to reason; nor ought any thing to be admitted which is inconsistent with the divine perfections. Some seem to think it to be of the utmost consequence, even necessary to salvation, to understand the sacred scriptures as they themselves do; but is not this to set up their opinions as the standard for all christians? Every man has a right to judge for himself, but not to prescribe to others. 'Tis rash and censorious to condemn those who cannot see things in the same light that we do. Is it not possible that such as differ from us may be as sincere as ourselves? and certainly therefore as acceptable to an impartial and righteous God? It must be wrong to confine the divine favour to any particular way of thinking. This is laying too great stress upon a set of opinions. All we are able to do, in forming our religious principles, is to make the best use in our power of reason and scripture; and if we do this, with an upright mind, a sincere desire to know and do the will of God, we need be under no uneasiness as to our opinions. All important, necessary truth is plain; and *where mystery begins religion ends*. No person will be condemned for not believing what appears to him groundless and unreasonable; nor can any one be under an obligation to receive any doctrine as a scripture doctrine, till he sees that it is taught there; but have not many doctrines long prevailed among christians, which have no other foundation than passages of scripture misunderstood and misapply'd? An original corruption of nature many think is not taught in any part of the Bible. To affirm that men are corrupt and sinful by the very constitution of their nature, or, *by their original frame disposed to all evil, and averse to all good*, is to affirm, that God makes them so; for is not he *the former of our bodies* and *the father of our spirits*? And

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is it not said, that God *made man upright?* And after his own image? Ecclesiastes, vii. 29. Which is said not of Adam only, but of mankind in general: *THEY have sought out many inventions.* Does not the doctrine of the Trinity perplex men with respect to the very object of their homage? *One God over all,* is a principle of the utmost importance. The idea of *one God*, the maker and governor of the whole universe, is the foundation of true religion. The *divine unity* is the obvious dictate of reason; it is also expressly and earnestly inculcated both in the old and new Testament. Can there be more supreme beings than one? As to the person of our blessed Saviour, should we not be satisfied with St. Peter's plain declaration that he was *a man approved of GOD, by miracles, signs, and wonders, which GOD did by him.* Acts, 2. 22. Surely it cannot be right to assert, that there is any other being equal to the great, eternal, supreme, the one living and true GOD.

The Apostles, sensible of the destructive, fatal consequences of corrupting the christian doctrine, exerted themselves to the utmost, by most solemn, faithful warnings, pathetick and earnest exhortations, to prevent it; representing the guilt of perverting, changing, or adding to the gospel, as aggravated beyond expression, and charging christians, as they valued the truth of GOD, as they would maintain their fidelity to CHRIST, secure approbation at the day of judgment, and life eternal, to be upon their guard; and not suffer themselves to be deceiv'd and imposed upon. Now what the Apostles were so ardently desirous to have prevented, were they to return to the earth, they would be equally zealous to remove.

The *mystery of iniquity* began to work early, but was a considerable time before it grew to the enormous mass of popery; and as the corruption of the christian religion was gradual, 'twas reasonable to expect that it's restoration would be so too, and that light would break in by degrees. At the reformation the grossest errors and the worst superstitions were discarded; so much was then done, that it must be owing to criminal negligence that more has not been done since: A glorious example was set; pity it has not been better follow'd.

It is, however, well known to the learned, that much of the doctrinal system, which had been establish'd in the  
days



days of darkness, ignorance, spiritual tyranny and implicit faith was retained by the first Reformers; and alas! prevails to this very day. It has always been, and is yet too much the case of mankind, *that the prophets prophecy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so.* Jeremiah, v. 31. But this is most egregious folly! What infatuation! *to believe lies, and trust to broken reeds!* true religion does not consist in opinions, rites, or ceremonies, but in a good heart and holy life. Mistakes in judgement will not hinder the acceptance of those whose hearts are right with God; and it ill becomes christians to condemn one another on account of different opinions. All who sincerely mean the truth, and use their best endeavours to find it, whether they discern more or less, will be accepted.

The spirit of candour, love, and charity would prevent every disagreeable consequence from various ways of thinking; and that, I am sure, is a spirit warmly recommended by St. Paul. *Rom. 14.*

Truth is unchangeable; the condition of divine favour a fixed, unalterable thing. Persons may as well attempt to extinguish the sun with a sponge, or pluck the stars from the firmament, as think of recommending themselves to a righteous God, by any thing but real virtue of heart and life.

Every species of religion which does not lay the main stress upon moral excellence, or goodness of heart and life, is false religion; and that which excludes and contemns virtue is worse than atheism. What can the *righteous* Lord love, but *righteousness*? What can the great independent deity require of man but *to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly before him*? Micah, viii. 8. Can his law and government have any end but the perfection and happiness of his creatures?

Religion ought to be consider'd and treated as a thing entirely personal, as every man's own proper concern, the privilege of his nature, the result of his own reason and choice; concerning which he is accountable to God only; a right which it is impious to hinder or infringe upon: All authoritative interference, all force or compulsion here, is a presumptuous, insolent attempt to rob men of their birth-right, liberty; and indeed,

indeed, tamely to submit to such usurpation is to betray human nature and desert the great interest of the whole race of mankind.

One important end of life, is to *bear witness of the Truth*: A just representation of the doctrine of CHRIST would cut down all spiritual tyranny, put an end to all fierce contentions, dispel the grovelling, debasing sentiments of superstition, introduce universal harmony and love, and greatly promote true piety and substantial virtue; and such as perceive the falshood and evil tendency of any principles, that have been received for Christian doctrines, would do well to bear a steady, free and open testimony against them; nor can any thing but impotence take offence at such conduct. A greater service cannot be rendered to the important cause of truth and virtue, than by seperating christianity from the absurdities and superstitions which weak and ignorant, or wicked and designing men, have mixed with it. All objections would then vanish, and it would satisfy the reason of all attentive, well-disposed persons.

In these days of freedom, the Divine Providence affords the opportunity for doing this justice to the Gospel; and it must be highly agreeable to such as sincerely wish well to the glorious cause of truth and liberty, rational religion, and genuine christianity, that the opportunity is not altogether neglected. The noble attempt is made. The learned friends of mankind are exerting themselves to this important purpose; and though they may be treated with obloquy, have their characters aspers'd, and their endeavours counteracted by the rash, ignorant, uncharitable sons of bigotry and blind zeal, or the devotees of pride, ambition, and worldly policy, posterity will discern the importance of what they have done, reap the benefit of it, and bless their memories. May they steadily go on and prosper; not ceasing to exert their best abilities in this glorious service; till that *heap of rubbish*, under which christian truth has been so long buried, be entirely clear'd away, and the precious jewel shew itself before the eyes of mankind in all it's native brilliance and splendor.

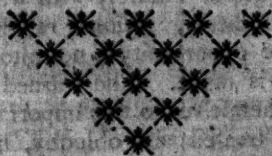
Such, in a considerable degree, was the reforming spirit of the late learned and worthy Mr. Thomas Dixon, from whose  
manuscript

manuscript the following observations upon several very remarkable passages of scripture have been extracted. They would, no doubt, have appear'd to greater advantage, if the ingenious author had intended them for publication.

However, they may in their present form be read by candid persons with pleasure and benefit. Whether they convince or not, they may have one general good effect, even to excite a spirit of thoughtfulness and enquiry, which is of great service to the cause of truth; such as desire fuller information upon the same points may consult Mr. Farmer, and Dr. Lardner. That they may conduce something towards the prevalence of just sentiments and virtuous practice is the hearty wish of

JOHN SEDDON.

Manchester, Jan. 2, 1766.





A Paraphrase with Observations on the  
Account of CHRIST's Temptation  
in the Wilderness.

St. Matthew Chapter iv. from the 1st. to the  
11th. verse.

1. THEN was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil. 2. And when he had fasted forty Days and forty Nights, he was afterward an hungered. 3. And when the tempter came to him, he said: If thou be the Son of God, command that these Stones be made bread. 4. But he answered and said, It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. 5. Then the Devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the Temple. 6. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: For it is written. He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time

time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 8. Again, the Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them: 9. And saith unto him, all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. 10. Then saith Jesus unto him, get thee hence, Satan: For it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 11. Then the Devil leaveth him, and behold Angels came and ministred unto him.

IT will here be necessary, by way of Introduction, to say something concerning the Devil, and the power which he is too generally supposed to have, to tempt, persuade, or seduce us to sin. This is a notion concerning which, out of deference to the common opinions of mankind, one would not express himself too positively: Yet it is not what I am at all inclined to believe, neither can I say any thing in defence of it. I shall therefore propose a figurative or allegorical interpretation of our LORD's temptation; that the Devil was not at all concerned in it, but that such thoughts, in the course of his meditations arose in our LORD's mind, as would naturally have arisen in the mind of any man in the same or like circumstances, in which our LORD then was; but as these thoughts, if pursued, would in their consequence have been evil and wicked, they are metaphorically, or figuratively, represented, as though they were the suggestions of the Devil or Satan, the Being to whom all evil qualities are ascribed. Men generally imbibe wrong notions in their childhood, and perhaps through their whole lives scarce hear them contradicted; nay, so firmly are they persuaded  
of

of their truth, without examining their foundation, that they will not bear to hear any thing objected against them; and it must be owned that men's prejudices deserve rather our pity than our anger or displeasure. Though therefore not one who hears me, should, by what I shall offer, fall in with my judgement, or esteem my explication right, yet I think I may justly expect to have it allowed, to say the least, that it is not without plausible Arguments, especially when the following things are seriously considered; which I propose not largely to handle, but with all possible brevity.

1st. Then, we are very frail beings by our very make and constitution. Our animal passions and bodily appetites expose us to innumerable trials and temptations; we are every moment surrounded with temptations to intemperate and impure excesses; avarice and ambition continually present themselves; the occasions of envy, malice, and hatred, are ever before us; and, without the utmost vigilance and circumspection, we are continually exposed to the danger of being overcome by one or other of these temptations. Frequent meditation upon our danger, and the strongest resolutions to preserve our innocence, are not more than sufficient to keep us in safety. Now can it be supposed, that the kind, the merciful God, the Father of mankind, the just, the righteous, the Moral Governor of the world, does not think these temptations sufficient for us, but that he must moreover let loose the Devil? So powerful, so subtle, so malicious, so wicked a Being, as he is thought to be! What a desperate chance must we stand against such an adversary! Such suppositions as these, one would think, should be far from all sober, and seriously-considerate persons.

2d. God, by his Prophet declares, (with a direct design, to oppose those, who hold two principles, one infinitely good and the other infinitely evil) "I am the Lord, and there is none else, I form the light, and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil, I the LORD do all these things. None of

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\* Isa. 45. 5th, 6th, and 7th Verses.

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the evils or calamities of human life are owing to the Devil, or any other evil spiritual being; but they are brought about by the providence of God himself, to teach mankind repentance and reformation. God alone bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up; and in this sense it is, that there is no evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it. God, by the Prophet Isaiah, severely threatens those who ascribed any calamities to any invisible wicked beings.

3d. In scripture the children of the Devil may very justly be understood, not of those, who are tempted or instigated by him, but of those, who imitate him in his wickedness. Those who imitate the faith and obedience of Abraham are called his children, tho' they are not naturally descendants. And in the Jewish language, it is common to call a man the son either of a person or thing which he resembles; so a man in distress, is the son of affliction; one of a mild disposition, is a son of peace; and he who is bold and courageous, is a son of thunder; so an envious, contentious man, may be called a son of the Devil, or in St. James's stile, a devilish person, tho' the Devil does not tempt or instigate him to wickedness.

4th. There seems to be a necessity of interpreting many things concerning the Devil, figuratively, if we would not assert the most absurd and ridiculous things. Every one who is acquainted either with human or divine learning, knows, that the most beautiful parts of it consist in figurative, bold, hyperbolical descriptions. Nay, nothing is more usual or ornamental in all kinds of poetry, than to represent good or evil qualities, virtues, or vices, under the characters of persons. Thus in the heathen poetry, the muses, the graces, and furies, faith, fortune, &c. have been represented as real persons. In like manner St. Paul has in prose, with great elegance, introduced sin and death, as tho' they were real persons; from whence our famous Poet Milton, took one of his universally admired episodes. Hence, as the Scriptures were wrote in the bold, figurative, eastern manner, when the literal sense of a passage is absurd, recourse may

may justly be had to a figurative interpretation. This is what protestants universally allow, in arguing against the church of Rome, and particularly against transubstantiation; for we say, our Lord's words, *This is my body, and this cup is the New Testament in my blood*, are to be understood figuratively, and not literally, lest absurdity and contradiction should follow from the literal sense. In like manner, when † Satan is said to present himself before the Lord among the Sons of God, there is a necessity of interpreting this figuratively; since one would think nothing could be more absurd, than as this place is commonly understood, that the Devil presented himself before God amongst the holy Angels. But I am inclined to think, that the Devil is neither really nor figuratively intended; for the word Satan may signify nothing more than an adversary, or a calumniator, or the abstract quality called calumny; which may with the greatest beauty be poetically described, either among the worshippers of the Sons of God on earth, or the Angels in heaven, accusing Job, as is represented in this second chapter; or it may mean no more, than the slanders of his envious neighbours. The word Satan does not only signify, but is rendered adversary by our own translators ‡. Again, to interpret our Lord's temptation literally of the Devil, would make it look very strange if not expose it to ridicule. Can any thing be more indefensible or incredible, than that the Devil should actually transport our Lord from the Wilderness through the air to a pinnacle of the Temple, and that from thence he conveyed him to an high mountain †. If the finest poetical writings, not to say prose ones too, were thus literally to be interpreted, they would lose all their beauty, and mankind would cease to admire, and be charmed with them.

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† Job 2. 1st. ‡ 2 Sam 19. 22

† In the accounts of the Temptation, where it is said the devil sheweth Christ all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, most, if not all, good commentators depart from the letter, and why not in the rest of the narration? Should not this always be done where good reasons may be assigned for it?

5th. The Scripture is as exprels as can be, that when we sin, we ourselves only are in the fault §. Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed. St. James says this against those who were ready to lay the fault of their being drawn into sin, upon God; whereas he tells them, God did not tempt any man; their own lust tempted them. St. James allows, that if God tempted them, that would be an excuse; certainly it would be equally an excuse, if the Devil tempted them: But their own lust only, excited by outward objects, tempted them. These considerations are enough to convince us, that the Devil has no hand in tempting us. But there is one reason more, that may justly be esteemed decisive in this debate.

6th. The Devil and his angels are really confined in a dark prison, out of which they cannot escape; and consequently they cannot possibly have any thing to do with us, or with our world. So St. Peter \* expressly assures us, God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. The same thing St. Jude † assures us, the Angels who kept not their first state, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. The prejudices of education are very strong, and scarce to be rooted out, otherwise one would think, every one must be convinced by such plain passages as these, that the Devil has nothing to do with us. In the New Testament, wherever our Lord, or his Apostles or followers, are said to cast out devils, in every instance 'tis wrong translated. When St. Peter § says, your adversary the Devil, goes about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour, he means those, whether Heathens or Jews, who persecuted the christians. When St. James † says, resist the Devil and he will

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§ James 1. 14. \* St. Peter 2. 2. 4. † St. Jude 6. § St. Peter 1. 5, 8. † St. James 4. 7.



flee from you; (as his Epistle was wrote in the sixty-third year of Christ, and the ninth of the persecuting emperor Nero,) he probably means, bear up resolutely against persecution, and ye will easily overcome it; or else he must mean, resist all evil thoughts, and all outward temptations to sin, and ye will obtain an easy victory over them. St. Paul † tells them, he proposed once and again to have visited them, but Satan hindered. It is plain from the context that by Satan, he means the persecuting Jews hindered him §. Satan is transformed into an Angel of light. St. Paul here alludes to the false Apostles, who put on an outward sanctified appearance \*. Why hath Satan filled thine heart? Why hast thou taken this evil counsel †. Satan entered into Judas; that is, he took treacherous counsel against his Master. Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel ‡; the meaning is, some adversary to Israel, artfully prevailed with David to follow this evil advice. It would be tedious, and perhaps not necessary to run over every passage particularly; but it is evident from what has been said, there is an absolute necessity for a figurative interpretation\*. What I have offered I hope will justify me in giving a figurative Exposition of our Lord's temptation. And after what has been said the paraphrase on that account may be shorter.

Verse 1. Our Lord having been anointed with the Holy Ghost, and in an extraordinary manner declared to be the Son of God, was, by the impulse of this spirit upon his mind, which seems continually to have directed him, during his ministry upon earth; immediately led from Jordan, to a wilderness not far distant; the design of this retirement was, by serious meditation, to prepare himself for that public ministry he was

† 1 Thess. 2. 18. § 2 Cor. 11. 14. \* Acts v. 3.  
 † Luke xxii. 3. ‡ 1 Chron. i. 1. \* The account of the Temptation and Fall of our first Parents, as recorded in Genesis, is now generally allowed by learned men, to be allegorical. See Hays's Relig. Philos. Dawson on the 3 first chapters of Genesis, &c.

entering upon, to think over the difficulties he must expect among such an obstinate perverse people as the Jews; to reflect upon the dangers and trials he must be exposed to, and to arm himself with proper resolutions against them, and that he might thus be an example to us, how to resist and overcome temptations.

Verse 2. In such reflections and meditations as these, he spent forty days and forty nights, during which time he kept a strict fast, for which he was no doubt miraculously enabled by the Holy Ghost, with which he was filled without measure. Probably the reason of his so long fasting, was, that his thoughts were too intensely engaged, to regard the wants of the body, which was miraculously supported, to prevent it's receiving any damage by this extraordinary abstinence. At the end of forty days and nights, when his intense thinking and meditation abated, he began to be sensible of hunger and the cravings of his natural bodily appetites.

Verse 3. Having in the place where he was nothing wherewith to satisfy his hunger, he began to entertain such thoughts as these; if I am really the Son of God, as I have in so remarkable a manner been publicly declared to be; if God doth take such delight and complacency in me, as he then said; being such a favourite of God, why do I suffer such extreme and severe hunger? Surely God would grant my request, was I to command, or desire him, that these stones should be immediately converted into bread to satisfy my present necessity. These were reflections, which our Lord's hunger and his dearness to his father naturally raised in his mind.

Verse 4. But tho' these thoughts seemed fair and plausible, Jesus, upon maturer consideration & deep reflection, corrected himself thus: Why should I entertain such thoughts as these? God has given me assurance that I am his Son and beloved by him, why then should I not trust and depend upon him  
to

to supply my wants in his own way? Why should I prescribe to his wisdom and goodness? Why should I direct him to assist me in any particular method? As for instance, to make for me bread out of the stones, when he is able to supply me, in infinitely divers ways? If he pleases he can give me something besides bread to satisfy my hunger, and to nourish me; for I know that God can preserve Life by other means than bread; since for forty years together, in the wilderness, he rained down Manna from Heaven for the children of Israel §. And if the stones should at my command be made bread, as this would be presumption in me, God might not grant his blessing, and then this bread would not nourish me: I will not therefore, as I know myself to be beloved of God, prescribe to him any particular method to supply me, but will leave it to him in what way he shall choose to do it.

Verse 5. Our Lord having thus overcome the temptation of doing any thing unworthy or unbecoming, upon account of his bodily appetites, but still nothing being brought for the supply of his hunger, as he was thus musing, he began to imagine, that possibly his being thus seeming neglected and unsupplied by God, was because he was not really the Son, and beloved of God, as he had before thought; he was therefore ready to resolve to go to the holy city Jerusalem, and place himself upon one of the battlements of the Temple, which was at a very great and dreadful distance from the ground.

Verse 6. The design of going on one of the battlements of the Temple, was, to gain full assurance whether he was the Son of God; for if from thence he cast himself down, if he was really the Son of God, he might depend upon it, that no harm should happen to him in his fall; for surely he might rely upon that promise, which seems in general made to all



pious persons; he will give his Angels, who are always ready to obey his commands, a strict charge to take care of thee and to preserve thee †; they shall as diligently attend thee, as a nurse doth her child, guiding, supporting, and defending thee with such a solicitous affection, that thou shalt not so much as dash thy foot against a stone; the least harm shall not befall thee.

Verse 7. While our Lord was entertaining these thoughts of thus gaining assurance, he again corrected himself by a passage of Scripture ‖; thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God; the word tempt here, signifies, thou shalt not distrust the Lord thy God; thou shalt not insolently demand further evidence of that concerning which thou hast already had sufficient proof; this sense of the word is manifest from the history to which it refers; for though God had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, by a mighty hand; though he miraculously fed them with Manna from heaven; yet upon wanting water at Rephidim, they tempted the Lord \*: the meaning of which is explained §, Is the Lord amongst us or not? They questioned whether God was with them: Warned by these distrustful Israelites, our Lord would not tempt God; he would not try any experiment in order to be ascertained, whether or no he was the Son of God, but he would rely and depend upon the assurance God had given him of this, when the Holy Ghost descended, and God declared him to be his beloved Son; he would not therefore do any thing whereby he should give the least intimation, that he disbelieved God.

Verse 8. Our Lord having got over this second trial, another immediately arose in his mind; he was now hungry, and likewise could not but foresee, the hardships and ill usage he should meet with, in the course of his ministry from the per-

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† Psalm xci. 11, 12. ‖ Deut. vi. 16. \* Exodus xvii. 2. § Ver. 7.

verseness of the Jews; he could not help comparing the miserable prospect he had before him, with the magnificence, and pomp, the luxury, and the pleasures with which potentates and kings are surrounded.

Ver. 39th. He further reflected, how easy it would be for him, intrusted with such great powers from God, to be an universal conqueror, and acquire the riches, the splendor, and the greatness of all earthly monarchs, if he would devote himself to the service of the god mammon, that visionary deity, who was supposed to preside over, and to bestow riches, upon his assiduous and diligent votaries.

Verse 10th. Our Lord, sensible of the evil tendency of these imaginations if indulged, immediately resolves to suppress and banish them; he would not suffer any thing to draw him from his allegiance to God; he could not serve both God and mammon, and the law was express § for the worship and service of God only, who would not suffer his true and faithful servants and worshippers to want any riches or honours that are truly good for them.

Verse 11th. Being thus come off conqueror over three of the greatest temptations, he became for the present free from such trying thoughts and reflections; and good Angels came to him, and probably applauding the piety of his resolution, against the trying thoughts that had risen in his mind, and at the same time bringing him all needful supplies, to refresh his body, almost faint and spent. It seems to be no small confirmation of this figurative interpretation, in that, Luke, in the account he gives of this temptation, says, \* when the Devil had ended all the temptations, *he departed from him for a season*, by which must be meant only his meeting with no other temptations and difficulties, which might, figuratively speaking, be imputed to the Devil, as these temptations were.

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§ Deut. vi. 13. \* Luke iv. 13.

For in answer to the improbability of our Lord's having these thoughts arising in his mind, 'tis easy to say, that they are not in themselves sinful, that the compliance with them is only criminal, whereas the overcoming and suppressing them is pious and praiseworthy. Christ had all the sinless infirmities of humanity, he was in all points tempted, (which word would in this, and innumerable other places, be much better rendered tried,) like as we are, yet without sin §. And he seems to me to have been under the influence of the holy spirit, not only in his pious and moral, but in his miraculous conduct. If after all, any person should think that the method I have taken in explaining these verses, is in any measure forced and unnatural, I desire it may be considered, to say the least, how utterly unintelligible the other method is †. But in this, and in every other case, I willingly leave all persons to their free opinions: Suffer me however, to make a few reflections, agreeable to the sense I have laid down.

1st. If the above account be just, we cannot plead in excuse for our sins, that the Devil tempted us to commit them. St. James seems to suppose, that we should have an excuse for our sins, if God tempted us, and I cannot see why we should not have an excuse for them, if so powerful and so cunning a being as the Devil, tempted us; but St. James says, we are tempted only of our own lusts, and every sinner shall stand speechless at the bar of God. Let us not therefore set ourselves to find excuses for our sins; let us not lay them to God, to the Devil, to fate or predestination, but to ourselves only;

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§ Hebrew iv. 15. † The propriety of the temptations and their application to the course of our blessed Saviour's ministry, is represented in a full and satisfactory manner by Mr. Farmer, in a tract published since the death of our author, which had he lived to see published, would have rendered his own performance more perfect. His notion of an allegorical representation of real temptations seems, however, preferable to an entire visionary scene; and is it not more honourable to our Lord? and more exemplary?

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let us not pretend any other excuse for our sins, than leaving them on repentance and reformation.

2. If the devil doth not tempt us, this is no encouragement to us to sin. 'Tis no reason why we should be less vigilant and careful, from whence soever our temptations arise; 'tis certain we have a sufficient number of them.

3. If the devil doth not tempt us, this may be a comfort to those, who are ready to run into despair, upon account of his temptations. Wrong notions in religion, if they have not really led men into sin, have occasion'd great dejection and sorrow, to many very pious persons; they have imagined the devil so very busy with them, that they have not dared to trust to the mercy of God, which is undoubtedly exceedingly dishonourable to the kind and compassionate father of the universe, as well as tormenting to themselves. Salvation is not in the power of the devil to hinder, but is in the hands of God to bestow, who is very ready to grant it to the sincerely penitent and reformed, and he will to this purpose, afford them all the help that can be reasonably expected from a tender and affectionate parent.

4. If the account we have given of the Devil be just, then all notions of witchcraft, or of being possessed by the Devil, are vain and groundless. 'Tis all deceit and imposition upon the weakness and credulity of mankind. For shame! let us entertain more honourable sentiments of the moral government of God; let us think ourselves safe under the protection of his providence, safe from the malice both of devils and wicked men.

5. Nothing can be more trifling and ridiculous, than to observe a fast of forty days, from this example of our Saviour. It is certain that Christ was miraculously supported during the forty days and nights, and that he did not feel the painful sense of hunger, till these days were over. It is impossible

for us to imitate him in this respect ; neither do we find that the Apostles or first Christians, pretended to imitate him herein ; it was an absurdity, reserved for later and more corrupt ages. To place religion in abstaining from those things which God has given us leave to enjoy in moderation, is both a senseless and impious thing. Religion never did, nor ever can consist in any thing, but living soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world.

6th. From the example of our Saviour, in the beginning of any good work, we may expect to meet with difficulties, but we should not suffer them to discourage us. Human nature was the same in our Lord, as in us, and he therefore could not but be affected with the feelings of want, and the difficulties that lay before him in the course of his publick ministry ; but none of these things moved him, so as to discourage him. 'Twas good advice of the son of Sirach, *my son, if thou come to serve the Lord prepare thy soul for temptation.* Difficulties will present themselves to us, in the entrance upon any good work ; but if they be resisted, they will gradually grow less, till the ways of wisdom will become ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.

7th. We here learn from the example of our Saviour, that we must not demand more evidence in matters of religion, when sufficient has been already granted us. A doubt had almost risen in our Lord's mind, whether he was really the son of God, and he was ready to try, by commanding stones to become bread, and by casting himself down from the battlements of the temple, whether he was the son of and the beloved of God ; but he instantly recollected himself, that he had evidence enough of his being the son of God, by the descent of the spirit, and the voice from Heaven ; and he was unwilling to affront, or to seem to distrust God, by asking more evidence. In like manner, let us believe the existence of God, from the evidence we have in the works of nature ; since it is impossible to account for our own existence, or the existence of any thing else, without the supposition of a God. Let us believe the christian revelation, upon the evidence we have

have from miracles, the fulfillment of prophecies, and credible attestation of facts. Let us believe a future state, and the rewards and punishments of it from the testimony of our Saviour, without desiring, foolishly, to have one of our acquaintance raised from the dead, to assure us of these things: I say let us believe these points upon the evidence we have, without desiring more, and let us frame our tempers and conduct accordingly; since, to allude to the words of our Saviour, *if we believe not Moses, &c.*

8th. In our Saviour we see the great advantage of a good acquaintance with the scriptures. Trying thoughts arose in his mind. There was no passage of scripture itself, that at first glance, might seem to countenance presumption or distrust of God, but he had instantly ready a more obvious clear passage, wherewith to resist the temptation, to satisfy his doubts, and to comfort him in his duty. Let it therefore be our care, to be acquainted with the whole counsel of God, that we may not by misapplying some texts of scripture either be led into sin, into despair, or into an uncomfortable melancholly service of God; that by our knowledge of other *plainer* texts, we may be enabled to go on our way, in the service of God, rejoicing.

9th. In the example of our Lord we see what are the principal temptations to which we are exposed, and by what arguments and resolutions we are to oppose and conquer them. Our temptations are drawn from our bodily wants, from our proneness to distrust the providence of God, notwithstanding his past goodness to us, and from our pride and ambition: our bodily appetites are very craving, and likewise very impatient of delay, and we are further apt to prescribe to God, in what particular way our wants must be supplied; but against temptations of this kind, our Lord was willing to wait God's time, to submit to God in what way he should be supplied; knowing that if he should be supplied in the way he himself desired, without God's blessing, it would signify nothing; and that by humbly resigning himself to God, he could supply him by innumerable methods  
for



for which he was every way sufficient. Again, we must resist temptations to distrust the providence of God, by reflecting on the favours we have hitherto received, and drawing from thence an argument for further hope: we should greatly offend God, by distrusting him, after such large experience of his kindness: *He who has begun a good work in us, will carry it on to perfection in glory; he that spared not, &c.* But to strengthen this argument for dependance upon the providence of God, we must be careful to preserve our innocence, and to be found in the way of our duty. Finally, we must resist temptations to pride, to ambition, to great increase in riches; by reflecting that our supreme regards are due to God, and to him only; and that could we make the greatest acquisitions in temporal wealth and power, this could never make amends for withdrawing our affections in the least from God, and consequently for forfeiting the favour of God.

Lastly, if we resist temptations, and resolutely preserve our innocence, we may expect that providence will in due time come into our assistance.

Though God doth leave his sincere servants for a season to severe trials, if, in a faithful allegiance to him, they bear them patiently; if they mortify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, they may trust, that he will in the course of his providence, grant them whatever he shall see truly good for them, and make up to them their present trials, and particularly conduct them safe to the glories of his heavenly kingdom. Let us therefore hearken to the words of the psalmist §, *Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord: Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.*

A Paraphrase with Observations on the  
cure of Peter's wife's mother, and  
the Possessed at Capernaum.

*Matthew viii. from the 14th, to the 17th.  
Verses inclusive.*

14 AND when Jesus was come into Peter's House, he saw his Wife's Mother laid, and sick of a Fever. 15 And he touched her Hand, and the Fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. 16 When the Even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with Devils: and he cast out the Spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick. 17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the Prophet, saying, himself took our Infirmities, and bare our Sicknesses.

ver. 14. **P**ETER and Andrew, James and John, being just invited by Christ, to attend upon him; they all together went from the synagogue to Peter's house, as Mark §, informs us; there the mother of Peter's wife was laid up of a Fever, which Luke says ||, was great or dangerous;

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§ Mark i. 29. || Luke iv. 38.

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our Lord was immediately acquainted with her case, and the danger she was in, by the persons who waited upon her; and at the same time they intreated him, to exert his divine and healing power in her favour. Jesus, being never deaf to the requests which were made to him, especially by those, who, from what they had seen and heard of his miracles, were humble believers in his divine ability to answer their requests: (St. Luke \* tells us, that) as he was standing at the side of the bed, on which the sick woman lay, he rebuked the Fever, probably by a short prayer to his father that it might be removed.

Ver. 15th. Then † he took her by the hand, and raised her up in her bed; as Peter did afterwards, when he restored Tabitha to life ‡; the feverish disorder instantly left the woman, and that moment she was so well, as to assist in ministering to, or waiting upon, Jesus and his disciples at supper.

Ver. 16th. Supper being over, and the evening being now come, or the sabbath being finished, which begun after one Sun-set and ended after another §: *From evening to evening shall ye celebrate your sabbath.* The Jews in our Lord's time, were very observant and tenacious of their ritual institutions; and therefore, though many in this town of Capernaum were persuaded of Jesus's divine ability to work miracles, and though they knew that he was now in the town, he having appeared publickly at the synagogue; yet being superstitiously fearful of breaking the rest of the sabbath, by the small labour of bringing the sick on their couches to Jesus, during the sabbath, they deferred it till Sun-set; though possibly the reason, why they delayed, might be, not to give offence to the captious and caviling Scribes and Pharisees, who sought occasion to find fault: but let this be as it will; at Sun-set great multitudes were brought to him, perhaps all

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\* Luke iv. 39. † Mark i. 31. ‡ Acts ix. 40. § Lev.

xxiii. 32.



that laboured under any kind of disorder in the whole city. Both Mark \* and Luke † intimate as much, so that all manner of sick persons were brought to Christ; nay, those afflicted with the worst disorders, and such as were deemed incurable by human means, were brought to him, viz. those who were possessed with devils. It will be necessary here to observe, that the word used by Matthew, Mark and Luke, is the same; and likewise that it does not signify devils; indeed the Scripture never speaks of more than *one* Devil; and that one Devil and his angels, are reserved in chains of everlasting darkness, unto the judgment of the great day; hence it would be impossible, even for Christ himself, to cast out many devils. We must therefore, necessarily, have recourse to a different interpretation of the word. Now the word here rendered devils, properly signifies demons. Demons were supposed to be the souls of dead men, who occasioned divers disorders; such as melancholy, madness, lunacy, the falling-sickness, &c. But the Jews supposing that dead men occasioned disorders is no proof that they did so. However every one must be left to his own judgment, whether such a notion is probable or no. To me it appears utterly absurd; and I want some better evidence for it, than the mere groundless imagination of the vulgar.

The common people indeed may very naturally ask, if devils, demons, or the souls of departed men, did not possess any man, and occasion certain disorders, why do the scriptures speak concerning these things, in such kind of language? This is a difficulty, upon which I am sensible the common people will lay very great stress; and it will be difficult, and in many cases impossible, to beat them out of it; though the answer to it is in itself very easy.

Those who are acquainted either with ancient or modern books know, that, in numberless instances, we are not to

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\* i. 33. † iv. 40.

judge of the sense barely from the language that is used, since that language sprung from false Hypotheses or opinions; and the same language is still retained even by learned men, nay, by the Scripture itself; though it is well known, that those Hypotheses, or opinions, are groundless; it being the design of the sacred writers to instruct men in religion, and not natural philosophy; therefore, as in natural philosophy they retained the vulgar language, though that language owed it's rise to false opinions, so the scripture speaks, as if the earth was fixed and immoveable; which every trifler in Mathematics, now knows to be absolutely false: The sacred Writers contented themselves to speak according to the vulgar appearances and conceptions. Hence from the language made use of we have no reason to conclude, that devils possessed men; or that demons, or the souls of departed men, occasioned madness, or the like disorders.

So that by our Lord's casting out devils, we shall at present take the liberty to understand no more than that he cured several mad and lunatic persons.

All these diseased and mad people being brought to Christ, occasioned a great concourse, so that as Mark \* says, All the city appeared to be come together to the door of the house. Matthew and Luke † assure us, that he healed all that were brought to him; then Luke ‖ goes on to say, that devils came out of many, crying out and saying, thou art CHRIST the Son of GOD; and he rebuking them, suffered them not to speak, because they knew him.

According to our interpretation of the Words, possessed with devils, it will here be necessary to understand no more, than that the madmen imprudently and unguardedly declared, That JESUS was the MESSIAH; which during their madness they might have heard from others; or upon finding themselves

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\* i. 33. † iv. 40 ‖ iv. 41.

cured,

cured, they themselves concluded, that he who performed such extraordinary miracles must needs be the MESSIAH; however our LORD would not permit them to divulge this their opinion. Some may be desirous to know why our LORD enjoined silence upon them; several and satisfactory answers may be given to this enquiry. Though our Lord sometimes appealed to his miracles, in proof of his divine mission, that he might silence the unreasonable and perverse cavils of the Pharisees, yet he might perhaps be more desirous that men would follow him from a regard to the excellence and purity of his doctrine, than from their admiration of his power to work miracles. Again, it is very agreeable to the general character of our LORD, to suppose that our LORD's modesty, his perfect freedom from ostentation and vanity, might be a reason why he forbade those on whom he performed cures, to make them known, or to declare that they knew him to be the MESSIAH. Further:

If in the case before us devils were really cast out, then the reason why Christ enjoined silence upon them, was, that there might not be any ground of suspicion, that there was a secret agreement betwixt him and the devils, and that they suffered themselves easily to be dispossessed by him, and then to own him to be the Christ, that thus mankind might be the more craftily deceived and imposed upon by him: For to say the truth, if the devils were dispossessed by Christ, and then owned him, there would have been room for specious suspicion, that Christ did not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, as the Pharisees more than once insinuated ||: But Christ not only did nothing amiss; he took care that he should not be so much as suspected of evil. On the other hand, allowing these persons not to have been possessed with devils, but to have been only demons, or madmen, neither our Lord, nor any sober person, would be fond of the Applause of such. Once more;

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|| Matth. ix. 34. xii. 24. Mark iii. 22. Luke xi. 17.



The principal reason, that prevailed with our Lord, not to permit those whom he miraculously healed, to make him known, was, lest this should be the means of collecting a great crowd about him, and he should thereby give umbrage to the civil magistrate, as tho' he designed to set up for a king. The Scribes, Pharisees and Herodians, laid wait to find something against him in this respect, which required great reserve in Jesus. This indeed was the furthest from his intention, his kingdom not being of this world ; yet he was cautious of giving any ground to others, to think this of him. This seems to have been the general reason, why our Lord avoided crowds : The multitude would have gladly set him up and followed him as their king ; accordingly we find him often dismissing, or departing from the multitude \* : Upon the cleansed lepers blazing abroad his cure, there was such a confluence of people, that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places. In the 18th verse of this chapter he gave commandment to depart to the other side of the sea of Galilee, because he saw great multitudes about him. The same thing he did again, and for the same reason †. When Jesus perceived, that they would come and take him by force, and make him a king, he departed again into a mountain alone. And great reason our Lord had for caution in this particular ; since we find upon his tryal, that he was accused of sedition, and setting himself up for a king : Thus ‡ the Jews excited Pilate against Jesus thus, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend §. We found this fellow perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying, that he himself is Christ, a King ; he stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Gallilee to this place :* Indeed Pilate owned that he could not find any foundation for this charge ||. Probably another reason, why our Lord would not permit those whom he miraculously cured, to make him

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\* Mark i. 45. † Matth. xiv. 22. John vi. 15. ‡ John xix. 12. § Luke xxiii. 2. 5. || Luke xxiii. 4. 14.

known, was, lest he should too much excite the envy of the Pharisees, who by seeing the crouds attending him, would be provoked to cut him off, before he had fulfilled his ministry: Accordingly he more than once retired, that he might be more private in Gallilee \*: *After these things Jesus walked in Gallilee, for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.* Finally; it is probable, in some cases, Jesus's reason for enjoining silence on those for whom he wrought miracles, was owing to his concern for their safety; that the Jews might not do them harm, for their acquaintance or conversation with him: For † the Jews had agreed, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the Synagogue: In consequence of this † *Though many of the chief rulers believed on him, yet because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue.* Thus I have given a brief summary of the reasons, which induced our Lord not to permit himself to be publicly owned as the Messiah, though he now had cured innumerable disordered persons, and even demoniacs or madmen; and that, as Mathew observes, in a divine manner, with a word speaking.

Verse 17. St. Matthew having more briefly than Mark, or Luke, related these innumerable miraculous cures, here takes notice of the fulfillment of a prophecy, in the performance of these cures, which those other Evangelists have not mentioned. It is the observation of a very judicious person, that in the new Testament, the phrase, (*That it might be fulfilled*), implied, that the event was foretold in the old Testament, and that that particular event was intended by the prophecy referred to; but when the phrase in the new Testament, is only this, (*Then was fulfilled,*) it is, at least sometimes, an allusion, and is used when the words of the Old Testament are borrowed to express a present matter of fact, but without supposing that they are a prediction of that fact. We have had occasion above, to shew the justice of

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\* John iv. 1. 3. † John xi. 22. ‡ John xii. 42.

this

this observation in three instances \*; taking therefore at this time this observation for granted, we must conclude, that when St. Matthew here says, Christ performed all these miracles, *that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*, we must conclude, that what Isaiah † prophesied concerning Christ, *surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows*; must be a prophecy of Christ's healing diseases, and removing grievous maladies from sick and disordered people; I say this must be the meaning of the prophet, and his only meaning; so that whatever other senses have been put upon his words, by ignorant and fallible men, they must be all rejected, and this interpretation of St. Matthew stuck to, as the only true one. This interpretation, it must be owned, will set aside a great deal, of what has long been thought the most important part of christian divinity.

From what has been said therefore, observe, 1<sup>st</sup>, The error of the Papists, in forbidding marriage to their priests, and recommending celibacy to others, as a state of greater purity ‡. The Romanists claim their exorbitant powers as the successors of St. Peter. Now it is well known, that marriage is not allowed to their priests; that it is reckoned, by them, even worse than adultery and other uncleannesses; but it happens very unluckily for them, that Peter, whom they account their head, was actually married; and that not only before he became a christian and an Apostle, but afterwards; for his wife went with him, as he travelled up and down to spread the Gospel §: *Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other Apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas, or Peter*: 'Tis strange that the Papists have not yet had the generosity to own, that their forbidding marriage is described in scripture as a mark of

\* Matthew i. 22. ii. 15. 17. † Isaia liii. 4. ‡ Matthew viii. 14.  
§ 1 Cor. ix. 5.



antichrist; and an instance of corruption of the faith; St. Paul says \*, *in the latter times some shall depart from the faith: forbidding to marry.* And whereas many of the votaries of the Roman church retire from the publick to a solitary life, upon pretence of greater purity in restraining their carnal desires, and of more exalted improvement in piety and goodness, this is often a mere pretence, if the accounts we have are to be credited: Whatever was the intention of these persons in retiring, the restraint of their carnal inclinations has been no part of the practice of many of them. Besides, religion does not consist, in quitting the relation we stand in to society, in retiring from the world, in living in a cloister, or even in praying all the day long: If indeed there is any religion in these things, it is not to be compared with the performance of social duties, with behaving well as husbands and wives, as parents and children, with being friendly and useful to our neighbourhood, and with exhibiting an open and publick example of every thing that is excellent and praise-worthy.

2d. How complying is our Lord with every humble and reasonable request †. Seldom had any one occasion to repeat their requests to Christ; his breast was pitiful and truly compassionate; and therefore without any delay he let about the cure of Peter's wife's mother; he rebuked the fever, and it left her. Upon innumerable occasions likewise, did our Lord behave in this manner: And if such tender and humane dispositions were in our Lord, how merciful, and kind, and ready to answer our requests, must we suppose the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ to be? What is thus in the son must be eminently in the father. This consideration should encourage us, in our addresses and petitions to God,

3d. Observe the gratitude of this good woman ‡. Benefits in general are no sooner conferred than they grow old. Injuries

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\* 1 Tim. iv. 1. 3. † Luke iv. 38. 39. ‡ Mat. viii. 15.

we can remember, and perhaps never forget to our dying day. Kindnesses make but very faint and slender impressions upon our minds. There was only one of the ten lepers that returned to give thanks to our Lord, for his cleansing †. But she, far from thinking her thanks alone sufficient, immediately rose and ministered food and such things as they wanted, to Jesus and his attendants. Our Lord, though he performed so many, and so extraordinary miracles, chiefly subsisted on the benefactions of his friends; and with the gratitude and the respect that were shewn he was always well pleased ‡; and he will be equally pleased with the smallest kindnesses, even a cup of cold water, bestowed on any, because they belong to Christ. And now Christ is absent from us, and we cannot be so happy as to show our gratitude to him in person, for all that he has done for us, we are to show it to the poor, who are always with us.

4th. From what has been already briefly said, concerning the possessed with devils, we see the necessity there is, of having recourse to a figurative interpretation of many passages in the sacred writings. Great abatements are to be made in interpreting many parts of Scripture, on account of the bold, Eastern manner of speaking, which is very different from ours; and many strange things have been fathered upon the Scriptures, by interpreting them according to our present phraseology and customs. If every thing was to be interpreted literally, we should be induced to suppose, that God had hands and eyes, and human affections and passions. Protestants in general own, that our Lord's words, *this is my Body*, are to be interpreted figuratively, to guard against the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation. And really the common notion of persons being possessed with devils is scarce more defensible. One would not willingly suppose, that the merciful God has given leave to a company of malicious devils, to possess men, to convulse, to agonize, to torture, to rend

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† Luke xviii. 17. ‡ Matthew xxvi. 6. 13.

them at their pleasure; rather than suppose this, one would be willing to have recourse to a figurative, or almost to any, interpretation. And truly it will not be difficult to free the new Testament, in all the places in which it speaks of possessions, from countenancing this notion; for besides, that the scripture never speaks of more than one devil, that one devil is not once mentioned in the cases of possession; the word which is rendered devils, always signifies demons; which was language made use of from a mistaken notion, that the souls of wicked men departed occasioned madness, and some other disorders.

5th. The modesty of Christ is again conspicuous †. Tho' Christ had here performed innumerable miraculous cures, and had even freed many who were oppressed with madness, melancholy, the falling-sickness, &c. from their disorders, he would not boast of them himself, neither would he permit others to publish them, notwithstanding they might think themselves obliged in gratitude to declare them; and notwithstanding their open declaration was a proof of their persuasion that he was the Messiah, and divinely commissioned, yet he trusted to his works for reputation, rather than to his own Ostentation, or to the praises of others. Never any stuck truer to his own doctrine, than our Lord: *¶ When thou dost thine Alms, do not sound a Trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the Synagogues and in the streets, that they may be seen of men; verily I say unto you they have their reward. But when thou dost thine Alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth.* And is not this example of our Lord a good pattern for us to imitate? If his innumerable, extraordinary, and divine benefits, would not bear being boasted of, even by him, but were to be kept as private as possible; (though we ought in imitation of Christ to be as useful and kind as we are able,) our few, and imperfect good offices, will not bear to be mentioned by us; they

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† Luke iv. 41.    ¶ Matthew vi. 2. 3.



have need of the most retired privacy, to be an additional recommendation of them, to that God *who seeth in secret, and will reward us openly* \*. 6th. St. Matthew here helps us to one particular view of Christ's working miracles, as they were a fulfillment of prophecy, and consequently one proof of Christ's being the Messiah †. For though it is highly probable that the grand intention of miracles in general were to rouse the attention of mankind, and to engage a more impartial and considerate regard to the doctrine of him who perform'd those miracles. Yet besides this design of miracles, there is another, viz. As they were a fulfillment of prophecy, and a proof that Christ was the person pointed at in prophecy to be a performer of them. And that miracles were to be, and really were, one grand proof of Christ's being the Messiah, is plain from the answer which our Lord returns to John's messengers ‡; John enquired of him by his messengers, *Art thou he that should come?* Jesus, as a proof that he was he that should come, or the Messiah, *bids the Messengers return to John with this answer, The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.* By the answer, John would know that Jesus was the Messiah; as these miracles were a fulfillment of prophecy relating to the Messiah. So St. Matthew here tells us, that what Isaiah || foretold concerning Christ, *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, was fulfilled in Christ's curing bodily diseases.* It was foretold concerning the time of the Messiah §, *In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness* \*\*. *Then the eyes of the blind, shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb*

\* Matthew vi. 4. † Matt. xvi. 17. ‡ Matth. xi. 2. 5.

|| Is. liii. 4. § Isaiah xxix. 18. \*\* xxxv. 5, 6.

*ſung* †: It was read by our Lord, on the ſabbath-day, in the ſynagogue at Nazareth †, *The ſpirit of the Lord is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the Goſpel to the poor; he hath ſent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives; and recovery of ſight to the blind, to ſet at liberty them that are bruised;* then § he began to ſay unto them, *This day is this ſcripture fulfilled in your ears.* And as the Jews knew from the prophetical ſcriptures, that the Meſſiah was to perform miracles ||, when he was at Jeruſalem, at the paſſover, *on the feaſt-day, many believed on his name when they ſaw the miracles which he did.* And in places, too numerous to mention, our Lord appeals to his miracles, not only as proofs of a divine power attending him, but of the fulfillment of prophecy in him †. Hence,

7th. Let the fulfillment of prophecy, in our Saviour's working miracles, be a confirmation of our faith in him. Let us receive him as a teacher ſent from God; ſince no man could do the works that he did except God was with him. Let us receive him as that great and eminent perſon, in whom all the prophecies center: And as our convictions of the certainty of his divine miſſion grow more numerous and ſtrong, let his doctrine, and his divine example, have a ſuitable influence upon our temper and conduct.

8th. From St. Matthew's application of this prophecy, we learn to underſtand ſeveral phraſes in the ſcriptures, which, in common uſe, are of dark and obſcure meaning. Chriſt is here ſaid to *have borne our griefs, and carried our ſorrows himſelf; to have took our infirmities, and bare our ſickneſſes.* And theſe are phraſes uſed, St. Matthew tells us, to expreſs Chriſt's healing bodily diſorders; but how was it that he took on him theſe infirmities? How did he bear theſe ſickneſſes? Was it by becoming ſick himſelf, by being poſſeſſed

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† Iſaia lxi. 1. † Luke iv. 18. § Verſe 21. || John ii. 23.

† John x. 36. x. 25, 38. xiv. 11.

with devils? No, nothing like it: Nothing more is intended by these expressions, than Christ's healing disorders miraculously, or by a divine power. Hence, when Christ is said to have bore our sins, to have the iniquities of us all laid upon him, we cannot suppose, that our sins and iniquities, literally, became the sins and iniquities of Christ; or that he suffered the punishment, and so made satisfaction to the inexorable, unrelenting wrath and justice of his father. One would think that none could avoid seeing, that as Christ took on him the sicknesses of men, by healing them, so he likewise took on him their sins, by the power which he obtained from his father to remit and forgive the guilt of penitent persons, and by raising them from the dead, restore them to that immortality which they had forfeited by sin: I say, this is the most that can possibly be understood, by Christ's bearing our sins. And I desire likewise, that you would take particular notice, that this is St. Matthew's interpretation, and not mine.

Lastly. Shall not we imitate Christ by bearing, that is by *relieving*, as far as we are able, the infirmities and disorders of our fellow-creatures? Christ continually went about doing good; and he spared no pains that he might do good to the souls and bodies of men: As we call him our master, we should take care to be like him. \* *Let us therefore bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; † Let none of us look only on his own things, but also every one on the things of others; Let us weep with them that weep,* sympathize with the afflicted, abate the misery, and add to the happiness of our brethren and fellow christians, and of all mankind.

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\* Gal. vi. 2. † Phil. ii. 4.





Observations on Demoniacs, with a Paraphrase on the Destruction of the Swine at Gadara.

*Matthew viii. from the 28th to the 34th.  
Verses inclusive.*

Ver. 28. And when he was come to the other side, into the Country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with Devils, coming out of the Tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. 29 And behold they cried out, saying what have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time? 30 And there was a good way off from them a herd of many Swine, feeding. 31 So the Devils besought him, saying, if thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of Swine. 32 And he said unto them, go. And when they were come, they went out into the herd of Swine: And behold the whole herd of Swine ran violently down a steep place into the Sea, and perished in the Waters. 33 And they that kept them fled, and

and went their ways into the City, and told every thing; and what was befallen to the possessed of the Devils. 34 And behold the whole City came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

**M**ATTHEW, Mark, and Luke, all agree in assuring us, that this historical fact immediately succeeded the storm. But it will be necessary on this occasion, to speak something more largely than we have hitherto done, though as briefly as possible, concerning the possessions of the New Testament; having rather hinted than proved our opinion concerning them.

These possessions are, to common readers, very surprizing; we are apt to wonder there should be so many persons possessed with Devils, just at our Saviour's time, more than we read of, either before or after, in *Judea*, or in other nations, at any time. Some have been ready to think, that God permitted the Devils to be so very troublesome at that time, that Christ might have an opportunity of gaining a glorious victory over them. Other conjectural reasons have been assigned, to account for the frequency of diabolical possessions at that time, which we shall take no notice of; but if we can make it appear, with any considerable degree of probability, that our opinion is true, I think that, to all sober and serious persons, it will be a very great recommendation of it, that it gives a more pleasing, just, and honourable view, both of the natural and moral government of the gracious and merciful God, than the opinion concerning the possessions of the New Testament, which is now in vogue and generally prevails. It will moreover be proper to consider this matter at present, not only as this is the first particular story of the kind, which we have yet met with in *St. Matthew*, but as it lies in all the three Evangelists, is thought to be attended with the most difficulties,

ties, upon every scheme of accounting for the possessions of the New Testament.

The proposition we shall lay down, is this, That all those persons, who in the New Testament, according to our translation, are said to have been possessed with devils, were really no other than mad, melancholy, epileptic people; such as were troubled with the falling-sickness, convulsions, &c. And it may perhaps be of service here, if we remember what has already been said concerning the devil; when we explained our LORD's temptation \*. But as it is not absolutely needful in the case before us, we shall not here repeat any of it. We shall endeavour to prove and illustrate our assertion, by the following observations.

1<sup>st</sup>. There is only *one* devil mentioned in all the Bible: I know not that this has been taken notice of by any one in accounting for the difficulties that attend the possessions; but you may assure yourselves that it is certainly true; and that wherever you meet with the mention of more than one devil, in the English Bible, that it is manifestly and undoubtedly wrong; it is the fault of our translators; so that though we read in the English Testament, that a man was possessed with devils, or with many devils, we know it could not possibly be; and therefore when † the man said he had a legion, that is, 6,666 devils, he either spoke false, or like one who was crazed, or had lost his senses.

2<sup>d</sup>. As there is in all the Bible only mention of one devil, so that one devil is not so much as once spoke of, in all the cases of possessions of the New Testament: The devil is not once said to possess any man. This is indeed very surprising, when we consider how general the notion does and has prevailed, that the devil or devils actually entered into men; and that this notion has likewise been thought to be built up-

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\* Matthew iv. 1. to the 11. † Mark v. 9. Luke viii. 30.



on the New Testament; but the New Testament does not give the least hint of any such thing: Our translators had this wild and extravagant notion in their own heads, and they fathered it upon the New Testament, and have thus misrepresented and disgraced revelation; but this is not the only instance in which revelation has suffered, by mis-translating it, according to the weak, superstitious opinions which happened to prevail. All this is what learned men well know; and yet, by I know not what kind of prejudice, many of them earnestly contend, that, according to the New Testament, devils possessed many; which one would scarce credit, did we not certainly know, that in many instances, there is nothing so weak, and ridiculous, which some learned men have not set themselves earnestly to defend.

3d. In the new Testament whenever the devil, or devils, is said to possess any man, it should be rendered demon, or demons. Now demons were thought to be the souls of dead men. The heathens thought the souls of the dead did fill the air, and had very considerable power and influence over the living. These souls they call'd demons, and imagined them to be the dispensers of good or evil upon earth. Now, not to take notice of the many subdivisions, demons were divided into two general sorts, good and bad; that there were good demons, when any man or woman, in the early ages of the world, had been the author of any useful invention, when they had been serviceable, or a blessing to their neighbours, or country; when a king or a queen had reigned or governed well, after their death, they were had in reverence, and worship was addressed to them, as demons, or gods, or goddesses; and thus the heathen gods, or goddesses, were such as had lived useful lives on earth, and were thought to dispense blessings after their departure, to inspect and take care of human affairs; and accordingly prayers and Sacrifices were offered to them. In exact correspondence with this heathen notion, it is said †,

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† Acts xvii. 18.

Paul seemed, to some of the Athenians, to be a setter forth of strange gods, (in the original it is demons,) because he preached to them, Jesus and the resurrection; they thought he was acquainting them with new demons, or souls of departed men, whom he would have them worship. Again \*, *in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to doctrines of devils*; in the original it is demons. This is an exact description of the practice of the papists, who worship demons, or the souls of departed men and women. Originally, and for a long time, none but the souls of good men were called demons; for the most ancient writers speak only of good demons, who were thought the dispensers of not only good, but evil, as punishments for the sins of mortals. Hence they entertained a notion of evil demons, or the departed souls of wicked men, which only delighted and were employed in mischief; and from hence the word demons was, in latter writers, more usually applied to the departed souls of wicked men: Thus Josephus says expressly, that demons were the souls of wicked men departed. It was thought not decent to ascribe evil to good demons, and therefore a new set of wicked demons were invented.

4. Whatsoever the ancients thought concerning either good or evil demons, it was mere imagination without any proof; they only fancied that these things were so, and we have no reason to take the word of idle, visionary, superstitious people; especially as the scheme of demonology underwent more alterations than I have either time or inclination to mention. First the demons were all good, then both good and evil; afterwards they were thought to be evil; but all this is mere hypothesis or opinion, without proof; and therefore we may justly be excused, if we believe not one word that is told us about demons, or the souls of departed men, possessing any man upon earth.

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\* 1 Timothy, iv. 1.

5th. The notion that men were possessed by demons, or the souls of men departed, arose in the ages of ignorance, when they could no otherwise account for madness, melancholy, the falling sickness, &c. They thought these disorders were not agreeable to the course of nature, they therefore attributed them to the demons; and this notion was very much promoted by a set of cunning impostors, who went up and down, and picked money out of peoples pockets, by pretending that they could cast out demons by charms, and many trifling superstitious tricks; thus the lying author of the apocryphal book of Tobit \* represents the angel saying to Tobias, *touching the heart and liver, (of a fish), if a devil, or an evil spirit trouble any, we must make a smoak thereof, before the man or woman and the party shall be no more vexed* §, Tobias took the *Asbes of the perfumes*, and put the heart, and the liver of the fish thereupon, and made a smoak therewith, the which smell, when the evil spirit, (*Asmodeus*) had smelled, he fled into the uttermost parts of Egypt, and the angel bound him. This wicked story we have frequently bound up with our Bibles; and it is ordered to be read in places of worship, for the benefit and edification of christian people. By some such ridiculous arts as these they made ignorant people believe, they could drive demons away from lunatic, mad and epileptic persons.

6th. Even in ancient times, wise and knowing men did not believe one syllable about demons, or the souls of wicked men occasioning disorders. Hipocrates, whose name is the most famous of all others, for the knowledge of physick, was highly displeased, both with those who believed demons, or departed souls, possessed the living and occasioned disorders, and with those jugglers who pretended they could drive them away by charms and incantations: He declares, that

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\* Tobit, vi. 7. § Tobit viii. 2. 3.



the symptoms of those who were said to be possessed by demons, were the same with those that were observed in lunacy, madness, epilepsy, or the falling sickness; and that they were to be removed by natural and known means and medicines, if the distempers were not got to too great a head for human skill: It has been observed that the Greeks and Latins, called the same persons, promiscuously, either possessed, or mad; and the same holds good in the new Testament §.

7th. If devils or demons did not possess men and occasion disorders, (it may be asked) how came the scriptures to make use of such kind of language? We know that the scriptures used a figurative stile, extremely higher and bolder than we in these cold, northern countries allow ourselves in; if therefore the scriptures have, frequently, figuratively ascribed certain disorders to imaginary beings, the same allowances must be made to them that we always make to the writings of the ancient poets, when they represent the muses, the graces, the furies, faith, fortune, &c. as real persons, and ascribe personal actions and speeches to them. When we speak of St. Anthony's fire, we never in the least imagine that the saint occasions the disorder; but when names of things are once fixed in common use they are generally retained, though the opinions which gave rise to them are found to be false. Indeed the ancient manner of speaking is so very different from ours, that persons of little or no learning can scarce conceive it. But I think the proper answer to this query, is what we hinted on Matthew viii. 16 †.

8th. So far are the sacred writers from allowing, that demons, or the souls of departed men, possessed the living, and occasioned disorders, that they assert these demons to have no power at all, that they cannot do either good or hurt; and they are contemptibly called vanities and nothings. The heathen gods were such as had lived upon earth, and were

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§ Luke x. 9. † See Page 27. 28.

afterwards

afterwards worshipped; now these Gods had not that power and government, their votaries ascribed to them; and therefore the scripture properly calls them vanities and nothings §. *All the gods of the nations are Idols*; the *Septuagint* have it demons, or the souls of men; but because these departed souls have no power or authority, and can neither do good nor harm; they are, in the original Hebrew, justly called vanities; but they would be improperly called nothings, if they could really inflict grievous disorders: We may therefore conclude according to the scriptures, that those heathen gods, demons, or the souls of departed men, could not cause disorders. The same thing is said by St. Paul ||, *The Gentiles sacrifice to devils*; (in the original it is to demons, to the souls of dead men) †, and, *that the Idols, or demons, are nothing*; they have no power or authority; they can do neither good nor hurt.

From these observations, I think we are at full liberty to understand only madness, lunacy, the falling sickness, &c. when we read of devils, demons, or the souls of dead men, possessing the living.

If we bear the sense of these observations upon our minds, the interpretation of the passage now before us, will not be difficult, and the following paraphrase may be very much shortened.

Mat. viii. verse 28. Our Lord having appeased the storm soon arrived at the opposite shore, which † was over against Galilee, in the country of the Gergesenes; \* Mark and Luke say it was the country of the Gadarenes; but they are easily reconciled, by supposing Gadara to have been a particular town, or part of the region, or country, of the Gergesenes: The region of the Gergesenes was probably the ancient country of the Girgashites, which fell to the lot of one of the half tribes of Manasseh: Immediately upon our Lord's

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§ Psalm xcvi. 5. || 1 Cor. x. 20. † Verse 19. † Luke viii. 29.

\* Mark v. 1. and Luke viii. 26.

coming to land, he was met by two mad men ; \* Mark and Luke only mention one mad man, of Gadara ; but there is no inconsistency in this, some of the Evangelists having frequently omitted, or not given us, some things so fully as others ; and the great advantage of having four Gospels, is, that one gives us what another does not, or helps us to different circumstances of the same story. The reason why Mark and Luke only mention one mad-man, might be, that one was more fierce and more terrible than the other ; or perhaps a person of some note and distinction, and particularly he only, after the cure, desired to be with Jesus † : His history therefore they have only recorded. These mad men were so exceedingly disordered, being grown worse by the long continuance of their distemper ‡, that they tore off their cloaths, went quite naked, and they could not be kept in the town, or in any house, (there being some cases of madness, in which nothing is more afflicting to the disordered person than company) but they roved about in desert and mountainous places, and in the sepulchres of the dead ; and they were so exceeding fierce that they were become a terror to those parts, so that now none durst come near them §. They had often been fettered and chained, but no ordinary fetters and chains would hold them, so great was the strength they exerted ; and being broke from their confinement, they rambled about in desert places, and in the tombs, and now none could come at them, or durst attempt to tame and subdue them. The tombs in which these mad men had their habitation, were nothing like those in our church-yards, in cities and towns, but were usually little cells, cut in the sides and hollow parts of rocks and mountains, at some distance from the towns, and in lonely desert places : The sepulchre of our Lord was hewn out of a rock in mount Calvary : Such tombs remain to this day in Judea, as travellers tell us ; and Josephus speaks of some

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\* Mark v. 2. and Luke viii. 27. † Mark v. 18. Luke viii. 38.

‡ Luke viii. 27. § Mark v. 4. Luke viii. 29.



such, near the place where these mad-men were. And as to its being difficult to take and confine them, Herod had no easy task, even with an army, to destroy a set of robbers, who had lodged themselves in such tombs, and caves of mountains. The mad-men might here easily subsist, as John Baptist did, on locusts and wild honey; and Josephus tells that he lived in the wilderness, when young, for 3 years on what grew wild and without culture \*. These unhappy men, frightening all others from them, and having none on whom to exert their rage, they fell foul upon themselves, making a terrible, howling noise, miserably cutting their own flesh with sharp stones †. It is not told us how long they had been disordered; probably before their madness, they might have seen Jesus, for he had travelled all about their country ‡; and during their disorder, especially in their lucid intervals, they might frequently have heard of his fame, and divine power: As soon therefore as they espied him at a considerable distance, they ran to him, and fell prostrate before him; and though they had broke the fetters and chains, with which their friends had bound them, yet thinking that Jesus might be too strong for them, and dreading, and esteeming it a great torment, to be confined as they had been, they give Jesus good words.

Verse 29th. § We own you to be the Son of God, divinely commissioned, and assisted by the most high; and as you and we have no concern with each other, we beseech you for God's sake, that you would not offer to vex and torment us, by binding and confining us, as our friends have done; *art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* The proper meaning of these words may be, are you come thus unseasonably, to torment us by binding us sooner than the course of our disorder would bring our torment upon us? But we need not stay exactly to settle the speeches of mad men; how-

\* See Life of Josephus † Mark v. 5. ‡ Matthew iv. 25.  
§ Luke viii. 28. Mark v. 7.

however

however this we may venture to say, towards explaining the mad men's meaning, that there is nothing more grievous and tormenting than company; to some who are disordered in their senses. Our Lord had, even before they had done discoupling with him, commanded the unclean *spirit* to come out \*; which was nothing more than speaking in the language of the country; and this is a sufficient proof that the story is not to be understood literally; for if our Lord only commanded *one* devil, demon, or evil spirit, to come out, when there were a legion, or upwards of 6,600 in the men, our Lord would really have done them no service †. Our Lord, then perhaps addressing himself only to one of the madmen, asked him, What is thy Name? Like a true madman, that had perfectly lost his senses, he answered, My name is legion; the unhappy wretch was so far gone in his distemper, that he thought he had got upwards of six thousand six hundred devils or demons in him. We are told by the author of the inquiry into the meaning of demons in the New Testament, that he himself met with a woman, who told him of numbers of devils in her; and consistent with that principle, she told him what this or that particular devil said, and what they desired to be done; and she asked him if he did not hear or see the devils. The man goes on in a strain of madness, and fearing that Jesus would force him into some other country, desired that he would permit him to tarry where he was; and as there is nothing too absurd for a madman either to think or say, he desires that Jesus would not drown him, or cast him into the sea ‡.

Verse 30. It happened, at this time, that a numerous herd of swine was feeding on the side of the mountain close to the sea.

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\* Mark v. 8. & Luke viii. 29. † Mark v. 9. & Luke viii. 30.

‡ Mark v. 10. and Luke viii. 31.

Verse 31. The madman casting his eyes upon these swine and being himself a Jew, and knowing that swine were forbidden to the Jews: and likewise according to the notion that prevailed, thinking himself possessed with demons, he madly asked Jesus, that the demons might enter into the swine.

Verse 32. Jesus being willing to humour the madman whilst he cured him, said, Go. The mad-men were gradually cured; and whether it was, that the swine were frightened by some frantic actions of the madmen, whilst Jesus was curing them, and being on the side of a mountain, they, in their fright, easily tumbled down the mountain and were drowned in the sea; or perhaps some may not be unwilling to suppose that Jesus, to punish the Jews for keeping swine, contrary both to the law of God and their king Hyrcanus, caused the swine to be seized with the madness of the two men, which turning them giddy, they violently rushed from the side of the mountain into the sea and were choaked. Thus this case will be nearly the same, as when the leprosy of Naaman clave to Gehazi §. Mark || says, the swine were about 2,000.

Verse 33. The swine-keepers being frightened at their strange and great loss, ran in all haste into the town, and informed the inhabitants of the cure of the madmen, and the destruction of the swine. This made the miracle public.

Verse 34. Upon this multitudes flocked out of the town\*; and came to the place where Jesus was; and they saw one or both the madmen, lying in humble thankfulness, at the feet of Jesus: They even saw him, in whom madness had prevailed so far that he imagined he had a legion of demons in him, perfectly sober, and in his right mind, and likewise now decently clothed: This sight filled them with surprize,

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§ 2 Kings v. 27. || Mark v. 13. \* Mark v. 14. 15. 16. 17.  
Luke viii. 35. 36. 37.



and holy fear; they then received perfect information, from those who had been present, of all the particulars of the cure of the mad-men, and the destruction of the swine; and tho' from what had happened, they could not but be sensible that Jesus was divinely assisted, yet being more affected with the loss of the swine, than religiously and piously impressed with the divine miracle that was wrought; and fearing that Jesus might take occasion to punish them miraculously with some other loss, they desired him earnestly to depart out of their coasts: Thus they were willing to deprive themselves of the benefit of his instructions, and other afflicted persons of a miraculous cure from him. Jesus, not being forward at forcing himself, his instructions and miracles, upon those who so lightly esteemed them, immediately returned into the boat and sailed back †. As soon as Jesus was returned into the boat, one (perhaps both) of the mad men came to Jesus, and earnestly intreated, that he might go along with him, possibly fearing lest if he was separated from Jesus his disorder might return, and being desirous to enjoy the advantage of his conversation and instruction: However, it not being agreeable to the usual custom of Jesus, ostentatiously to carry about with him those on whom he had performed cures, he would not grant the man his request; but he sent him back with this direction, go home to your friends and acquaintance, who know the miserable condition in which I found you, and let them know how God has had compassion on you, and has graciously relieved you; and your presence with them must be a standing memorial, of the grace and mercy of God: The general reasons, why Christ ordered those on whom he wrought miracles to conceal them, were, his modesty, and that he might not give Umbrage to the civil government, by collecting a crowd about him; as these reasons did not hold here, in this case he bids the man publish the miracle, for the glory of God; for it could be no offence against modesty, to publish a mi-

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† Mark v. 18. 19. Luke viii. 38. 39.

racle when he himself was in another country, and when the man was ordered to mention it to the glory of God; and he could not offend against the civil government of Judea, by the mention of a single miracle in another country, when he himself was not present: Besides, the inhabitants seemed little disposed to collect in crowds about him, so as to raise suspicions in the civil government, much less would they do so whilst he was absent; nay, they seem as if they would rather have forcibly driven him from them, than have disturbed the civil government in his favour; indeed this man being there present, and publishing this miracle, might gradually abate the prejudices of the people, and dispose them in due time for receiving the Gospel. According to Jesus's command the man published the miracle in the town, and in all the region of Decapolis; so that all who heard of it were astonished, and could not help being convinced of the divine power of Jesus.

We shall now proceed to a few remarks, and, 1st. I think we may now appeal to every attentive person, whether the interpretation we have given, or that which is commonly received, concerning demons, is the true one. I will not pretend to say, that there are no objections against the interpretation that has been proposed; but I think the general account of the rise of the language used in cases of supposed possessions, and the occasion of its becoming common, may be absolutely depended upon; so that no great stress should be laid on our not being able to give a satisfactory interpretation of every word or sentence; for the minds of the ancients were pretty much confused upon these things; it is therefore not to be wondered at, if we often do not perfectly understand their words; and as the accounts we have of these things are left us by those, who believed that devils, Demons, or the souls of dead men, possessed others, it is not at all strange, that they should speak of these things, in language very favourable to their opinions; though I think that abundant proof has  
been

been offered, that those opinions were built upon very false grounds: But there are great and insuperable difficulties on the literal interpretation: If the man had a legion of devils in him, how came our Lord only to command *one* to come out? So great indeed are the difficulties of the literal sense, that a certain right reverend Prelate, in answering the objections of a deist, very lately sufficiently exposed himself; his lordship computed how many Roman soldiers made a legion; then he found the number of devils that he thought entered into the 2,000 swine; he farther calculated that more than three, but not quite four devils, entered into every hog; the necessary consequence of which was, that some of the devils were to be split into two or more parts, that every hog might have its due proportion (of devils.) If I was disposed to laugh at, and to ridicule this part of the New Testament history, I would endeavour to imitate the bishop: If his lordship had but been aware, that it was possible for a mad man to speak falsely or foolishly, it would have been of no difference to his reputation with wise and considerate persons.

2d. I think the interpretation we have laid down gives us a more amiable and honourable view of God, and his providence, than the common opinion about possessions. Neither the devil, nor the souls of wicked men, have power to hurt us, or to inflict disorders upon us. Whatever disorders we, or any of our fellow creatures, at any time labour under, they proceed from God, who is the gracious and indulgent father of mankind; and he corrects us in compassion and in measure, as one who while he punishes us is concerned for our welfare and happiness: And is not this more agreeable to us, as well as more honourable to God, than to suppose that the devil, and evil spirits, have power to torment us; who in convulsing, agonizing, torturing, and rending us, can be supposed to have no other end in view, than the wreaking of their malice. Let us therefore rejoice that we are in the hands of God, for his mercies are great.



3d. The divine power of our Lord was equally manifested and his actions were equally miraculous upon this, as upon the common Interpretation. Our Lord performed miracles upon those who were disordered, whatever was the occasion of their disorders. Some may think it an honour to have the devils bow down to him, and to confess him; but the question is not, what would be an honour to Christ, but what was really the case; and as I think we have proved, that devils were not here at all concerned, we should not ascribe to Christ the honour of their confessions, which do not at all belong to him. Christ has too much real glory and honour belonging to him, to be beholden to that which was feigned: Besides, I imagine it would rather have been a disgrace than an honour, to have had the devils fall reverently before him; this would have given too much room to suspect, that at the bottom there was an agreement betwixt them. However, a very great and divine miracle was wrought in curing the mad men, which may easily answer all the ends of miracles, at least as well as if devils had been actually concerned.

4th. From what hath been said, we see how easy it is to give an answer to those who ask, how it came to pass that we read of more persons possessed with devils, in our Saviours time, than before or since? The real state of the case appears to be this that *none were either then, before, or since possessed with devils, or demons.* Whether there are at all times an equal number of mad people, we cannot say; but I believe, if Jesus Christ was now to travel thro' England there would more such persons be presented to him for a cure, than we read of in all the Gospels; and except we suppose the people so disordered at present, to be possessed with devils, we must give that opinion up, concerning the persons mentioned in the Gospels; for they are afflicted in like manner, and the symptoms of both are the same, as we shall be fully convinced, if we do but attend to the description of lunacy or madness, which was ascribed

to demons, as given us by an ancient physician, Celsus †. "It appears in different shapes some are merry, some are sad, some are easily kept within bounds and are only mad in their words; others are furious and outrageous; and of these, some only offend in using violence, others apply arts, and look and act as if they were in their senses, only to catch an opportunity of doing mischief; the difference betwixt them is discovered in the event." Are not these the same symptoms that are now common among us?

5th. We may learn not to disturb ourselves, with any vain, superstitious fears, of the devil, or of evil spirits. We are not subject to any malicious powerful beings: The Lord God omnipotent, only reigns, whose tender mercies are over all his works. This consideration should fill us with ease and tranquility; otherwise we do not give God the honour that is due to him; we do not repose that confidence in his providence, which his wisdom and goodness justly require from us.

6th. How unfeignedly thankful should we be, for being preserved in our right minds: And how compassionate towards those who are otherwise. We can no way better express our thankfulness for, and our sense of, the value of having our health and our reason continued to us, than by carefully preparing for our latter end, by a life of useful virtue; for we know not how soon death may overtake us, and put an end to life and health; or if life is continued to us, our health may be enfeebled, or our reason disturbed; when we shall be utterly incapable of rational service or improvement. I should be very far from asserting, that any shall be called to account for the time in which they are deprived of their reason; however, it must be owned, that during the alienation of our minds, we can make no progress in our qualification for future happiness; so that we cannot be too thankful for the continuance

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† Sykes Inq. p. 63.

of health, and the due use of our reasonable powers; and we cannot treat with too much tenderness those who are unable properly to apply their intellectual capacities and active powers.

7th. Whereas it has been thought strange that our Lord should do the Gadarenes so great an injury, as to destroy about 2,000 of their swine, let it be observed, that our Lord's miracles and conduct were generally benevolent, so that an instance or two, as this, and the figtree (which does not come under present consideration) seemingly otherwise, ought not to be urged as objections; besides, if, as is not at all improbable, the swine were frightened into the sea, by the frantic actions of the madmen, why should our Lord be blamed for this? But if his causing the madness of the men to pass into the swine was the occasion of their being suffocated, I then say, that it is very likely these madmen, and the greatest part of the people about Gadara, were Jews; for our Lord would scarce have gone amongst them if they had not been Jews, his personal ministry being confined to them; so we find, that for fear of giving offence to the Jews, it was with difficulty he was persuaded to work a miracle for a Syrophenician, or gentile woman. Gadara had been before Herod's time, and was indeed now, a part of the province of Syria, but during Herod's reign it had belonged to Judea, (the Roman emperor Augustus having made him a present of it,) when it was stocked with Jews; who still remained there. And as it was not lawful for them to have any thing to do with swine, both according to the appointment of God, and their king Hyrcanus, our Lord being a prophet divinely commissioned might justly inflict this punishment upon them; especially, as there was no way of punishing them for their crime in this world; they being not liable to the censures of the Jewish Sanhedrim, upon account of the change of their civil government; not to say, that the perverse temper he now saw to be in them justly deserved it.

8th. How



8th. How destructive to the souls of men is an undue attachment to riches. Because our Lord had been the occasion of some temporal detriment to the Gadarenes, they are willing to deprive themselves of all the advantages of his divine instructions and miracles; they pray him to depart out of their Coasts; he went; and we never read that they were favoured again with his presence. Let it be our concern, that the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, do not prevent the influence of those divine instructions with which we are favoured, since this would be in Effect to say to God, depart from us, &c.

9th. We have here a fresh and remarkable instance of the modesty of our Lord. Agreeable to his general freedom from vanity and ostentation, he would not permit the cured madmen to be with him; and he orders him to tell his friends, that it was God that had had compassion on him, and had done great things for him, Our Lord assumed none of the good he did to himself, but ascribed all to God. How much more should we do the same? Since we have the power and the means of doing good, all from God.

What has been in general said about possessions, I would not have understood as a matter of indifference, curiosity, or novelty; but as a matter of importance; as what will give us more just and honourable ideas of God, free us from numberless vain and idle superstitions; and enable us to read the scriptures with less confusion, and more profit and improvement.

#### ERRATA.

PAGE 4. line 30. for *imoprtant*, read *important*. Page 6. l. 30. for *viii.* read *vi.* Page 6. l. 37. for *hire*, read *here*. Page 13. l. 25. for *onr* read *our*. Page 15. l. 2. in the Notes for 1 *Chron.* 1. read 1 *Chron.* xxi. 1. Page 17. l. 21. for *seeming* read *seemingly*. Page 19. l. 5. for 39. read 9. Page 22. l. 28. *dele of after son.* Page 27. last line, for *those*, read *judge*. Page 45. l. 32. for *hnr* read *hurt*. Page 48. l. 6. for *tells* read *says*.

THE END.

to the fact that the world is not a perfect one, and that the only way to improve it is by the action of the individual. The only way to improve the world is by the action of the individual. The only way to improve the world is by the action of the individual.

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and have adopted as a matter of convenience, as when will  
of that kind in a matter of convenience, as when will  
give us more full and complete view of God, His works  
and His will, and His character, and enable us to  
know the things which are hidden, and that will

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